



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Tallgrass Prairie  
National Preserve

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## **Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release**

For Immediate Release

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### **Salazar and Sebelius to Celebrate New Tallgrass Prairie Visitor Center** **LEED Gold Building Grand Opening July 13 with Public Event**

Cottonwood Falls, Kan. – The National Park Service is proud to invite the friends and neighbors of Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve to help celebrate the grand opening of the park's new visitor center on Friday, July 13.

The formal ceremony will take place at 7 p.m. and be headlined by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Secretary of Health and Human Services – and former Kansas governor – Kathleen Sebelius. Beginning at 3 p.m. visitors will be able to take part in activities ranging from prairie and ranch tours, to kite flying and face painting, to make-your-own-brand craft and button making to the Dream Rocket Project. The Tallgrass Express String Band will perform at 6 p.m. Following the 7 p.m. ceremony, visitors are invited to tour the new “green” facility and stick around to enjoy the night sky!

“We are excited about sharing this new facility with the people of Kansas and visitors from around the world who come here to see what life on America’s prairie was like,” said Superintendent Lauritzen. “The new visitor center will serve not only as a great way to introduce visitors to the stories of the heartland, but demonstrates the commitment of the National Park Service to minimize our footprint and adopt sustainable practices in our operations. We hope everyone will come out and take a look!”


The new visitor center that also houses the park’s administrative offices, was built with two major goals in mind—environmental sustainability and sensitivity to the cultural landscape.

The building was designed and constructed to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold rating. The facility employs geothermal heating and cooling, natural lighting from west facing windows and solar tubes in work areas, occupancy light sensors for efficient use of interior lighting, and low-illumination outdoor fixtures. Interior floors are concrete eliminating the use of volatile gas emitting adhesives for carpeting and no-odor, non-toxic paints were used. There are no on-site fossil

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fuel emissions reducing the building's carbon footprint and the gravel parking lot eliminates fossil fuel run-off. Water use is reduced with the installation of low-flow fixtures. Roof and wall insulation removes sound intrusions from outdoor mechanical equipment. Reclaimed lumber was used in the breezeway. All these features comply with guiding principles for federal leadership in high performance and sustainable buildings. LEED provides us with a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations, and maintenance solutions.

Sensitivity to the cultural landscape was achieved with the sighting of the facility on the landscape, the grade at which it is constructed, and the use of natural materials. Partially below ground the facility appears as an extension of a limestone fence that rises up out of the ground. The stone façade is locally quarried Cottonwood limestone, which allows the new building to blend into the historic landscape without looking like a historic building. The grass roof, which is beginning to show green shoots and stems, helps the structure blend into the prairie landscape. Four different prairie grass species are growing: buffalo grass, little bluestem, side oats grama, and hairy grama. The grass also contributes to the environmental sustainability by reducing water runoff from the roof.

The Visitor Center is currently open 8:30 – 4:30 daily. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway). For more information, visit the preserve's facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tallgrass-Prairie-National-Preserve/141113292599158>, website at [www.nps.gov/tapr](http://www.nps.gov/tapr), email [tapr\\_interpretation@nps.gov](mailto:tapr_interpretation@nps.gov), or call the preserve at (620) 273-8494 or 6034.

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